TRANSCRIPT—WILLIAM (BILL) VERIGAN

ELIADA HOME INTERVIEW

Interviewee: William Verigan

Interviewer: Cliff Davids

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Cliff Davids: Today is September 29th, around 10:20 a.m. on Wednesday. We've had rain for the last couple days, I believe we have rain coming in today as well. This is an interview with Mr. Verigan. We're going to start off by just asking Mr. Verigan a few basic questions about some personal information and then we'll start with his story.

Mr. Verigan, I want to thank you for taking the time and being here today for the interview. Sir, can I have your full name, please?

William Verigan: William Brennan Verigan.

CD: Could you spell your last name for me?

WV: V as in victory, E-R-I-G-A-N.

CD: And what is your date of birth, sir?

WV: 2-17-30.

CD: Could you give us your current address, please?

WV: We're located now at 7 Lionel Place, Number 2, Asheville, North Carolina, 28806.

CD: Thank you, sir. Let's start off by some of your earliest childhood memories, growing up.

WV: I'm originally from down in Florida, Lake Jim, Florida. We lived surrounded by orange groves there and we grew up in a good Christian home, even though later on—. I had five brothers and one sister. As they moved out, I was the youngest so about at about nine years of age, why, that's where I first came to know Jesus Christ as my personal savior. At twelve years of age, I took a trip up to New Jersey just for a birthday, to see the Empire State Building and like this. One of my brothers was living there at the time. While there we met some of the neighbors, some of the neighbor children. We were just there, just for two or three weeks, but we got interested in playing with the kids and socializing with them and so Mom asked us to just go ahead. She was going to send back to Florida and get our school records and we just entered school there. This was February and we were going to go ahead and enter into school there and go back to Florida that summer. We got a call, a letter, during April or so of that year, and my grandmother said that somebody had vandalized our house. So from that point on, we had no home in Florida. We had the home there, but it wasn't livable for us so we started over in New Jersey with just three suitcases. We started life over anew there. I continued doing my schooling there, graduated from Clinton High School in New Jersey, started in my first job in a service store near Clinton. Broke in on the Fourth of July weekend with no experience in the store and for some of you people in the modern day that we're living in now, you never knew what a service store was. It was quite an experience. After about three years in that I was drafted into the army, I served two years in Korea. After coming

back from Korea I went back into the grocery store again and worked there for another nine years. I was terminated there because of a stand for Jesus Christ, a witness. The town people there wanted to get a petition signed to put me back into the store again and I said, "No. That's what the Lord wants and that's acceptable for me too." I worked for three years with Prudential Insurance Company as a debit agent and meanwhile contact started with Eliada Home. My pastor, Earl Cook, a Baptist up in Clinton, New Jersey, came down looking for some children's homes, some children's works down here in the south. He came down to Elizabeth, Tennessee. There was a Mr. Burkner, a missionary there working with children and Pastor Cook said, "Would you know of any other children's home that I might visit?" and he said, "Yes, there's Eliada Home for Children, down in Asheville, North Carolina you might drop down there and visit them." So he came down, dropped in to visit them and then returned to our church. He told us that there was going to be a group traveling, a chorus group from the home, traveling up that way. When we think of a chorus group now as half a dozen people going around and singing. At that time, there was something twenty-two or twenty-five kids from down in kindergarten right on up to high school. Mr. Arch Cameron, the director here, brought that group up and they had something like three different vehicles that they drove up there and they had something like fifteen flat tires on the way and they had to pass the tires on the road, pump them up again and go on down the road. They came to our church and ministered there to us and returned eventually back to Eliada. That was the first contact that we had with Eliada Home.

CD: Do you recall what year that was?

WV: That would probably have been in fifty-nine or sixty, somewhere around that.

Mrs. Verigan: It was about that.

CD: The second voice you hear would be Mrs. Verigan who is sitting at the table with us. Mr. Verigan, let me backtrack a little bit, could you give me the names of your parents?

WV: My father's name is Lester William Verigan. My mother's name was Lillian Connor Verigan.

CD: Did you have brothers and sisters?

WV: Yes, I mentioned before I had five brothers and I did have a sister.

CD: Would you be able to give us their names?

WV: The oldest one was Lester Verigan, then there was Owen Claire Verigan, Earl Chester Verigan, Ida Winette Verigan, my sister, there was Don Calvin Verigan and there was Wallace Edwin Verigan. They were all the children. I think I got them all.

CD: We left off around 1959 or perhaps as late as 1960. At that time did you have a family?

WV: At that time I was married in 1957. We had our first child. We were married on my birthday, February 17th, 1957. My daughter was born on January 7th, 1958.

CD: And your wife's name?

WV: My wife's name is Eleanor Beedy Verigan.

CD: Beedy is her maiden name?

WV: That was her maiden name.

CD: And you mentioned a daughter?

WV: My daughter's name is Faith Caroline Verigan, who works at Eliada Home now and has been there for nineteen, almost twenty years.

EV: And she grew up there.

CD: What was her date of birth?

WV: Her date of birth was January 7, 1958.

CD: Please continue your narrative, after the ensemble departed.

WV: After they returned, that first contact that we had with them, of course we were interested in trying to be of some help to them and so I wrote down to Mr. Cameron, and asked if there was anything that we might be able to do. He had mentioned about some of the bathrooms at Eliada, they were in poor repair and they were going to be wallboarding some up and they wanted to put tile in on the walls of the bathrooms. So at that time, our Sunday school there at Clinton Baptist, we had a tile project where we sold individual tiles to children and the money that was receipted from that, was sent to Eliada to purchase the real tiles here at Eliada. And that was to go in those bathrooms. That was our first contact, first helping with Eliada. My wife had previously been, as a single girl, had much work in New York, the Word of Life in New York and then they had a broadcast every Saturday night and she was an usher in those meetings that they had there and she went up during the summertime. Mostly every weekend she spent at Word of Life up in Schroon Lake in New York. And after we were married in fifty-seven, we went up that first summer. We went up there to Word of Life, came back down and then

through this contact with Eliada, we decided to go down and visit them the next summer. So we went down to Eliada Home and we were just there for just a weekend. We left there on a Friday night, drove down, got here Saturday at noontime, stayed over Saturday night, and left after lunch on Sunday to go back to New Jersey. So we had a real short trip here and then we went back to New Jersey. Next summer we decided to come down for some of camp meeting, which they usually had at the end of July and the first part of August. It was a ten-day camp meeting time. So we drove down once again, we got down here and we were able to be here five days of that camp meeting. During that camp meeting time, Reverend John Kleinpeter was the evangelist at that time and through his ministry, I was challenged to come and to help in the work here at Eliada Home. As we returned on our trip, as we started out of the campus on our return trip, I asked my wife how she would think on coming back down here to work. She said she had been thinking about the same thing. Pardon me for being a little sentimental. The Lord spoke to us at that time and we went home that August, 1963, and as I got home I called Mr. Cameron and asked him if there was any work that I might be able to help them out with and he said, “Yes, there’s plenty of work that you can find to do here.” I knew that because during the camp meeting that I was at I saw they were very short in manpower. He said, “I have no idea what we can even pay you. If the Lord has spoken to you about coming, then you come.” And so we packed up our things and in September of that year we were back at Eliada.

CD: 1963.

WV: 1963, September.

CD: Tell me a little bit about that first camp meeting that you attended. You had mentioned that it was a five-day trip for you all together, five days of being at the camp meeting. What do you remember from the meeting?

WV: The main thing that I remember is the challenge that Brother Kleinpeter gave to us concerning serving the Lord, being willing to be of service to the Lord. I can't even remember the messages or anything, but I can remember the Lord speaking to my heart. That's all it took. My wife has something to say.

EV: We met in the Old Tabernacle. We had the meetings in there. Reverend Penland, he was the song leader of the meeting and then during the course of time, a reverend from Tennessee, Bob Ambler, he became the song leader too. All the kids would march up there to the camp meeting and they would have, after the service they had a camp store where the children could go and buy candy bars or a soda or something. We had the meetings every night and people would come in from the city and join in the camp meeting. During the day, the children went swimming down in the old swimming hole.

CD: Where was the swimming hole located?

EV: It was down, you know where there used to a tabernacle, the new one right there as you come into Eliada? It was right down in the road that goes down that way. It's toward the new Camelot now is and that's where we went swimming. One of the men that came up from Florida, Mr. Alexander, he was swimming around in the water and he had white hair and when he'd come out he had green hair. He had that hair for so long.

WV: Because of the algae.

EV: They had the Alexanders and they had an older couple there, I don't remember their name. They had a little cottage up on a hill where they'd stay all summer and then they would leave and go back down to Florida in the wintertime.

CD: Do you remember whether the Compton Cottage was being used at that time? Compton Cottage, that blue cottage that's right next to the tabernacle.

WV: The old tabernacle? Yes, at that time the assistant director was there, Louis Griffith. When we first came, Louis Griffith was the assistant director here at Eliada, and they lived there with their family.

EV: Oh that was the former director, before Louis Griffith, that home belonged to the one who started the work.

WV: That was Mr. Compton's house.

CD: That's right, they call it Compton Cottage.

EV: They had a little house behind it where their child played.

WV: They had a doll house built out in back of that cottage. It was still there, a little doll house.

EV: I don't know if it's still there now.

CD: Describe the Eliada campus in 1963 when you first arrived. What was it like?

WV: When we first came, the entrance road came off of Eliada Home Road, the back road. The entrance was right below the director's house at that time, on the bend of the road. The main entrance came right on down from there straight down as you came in

that way on the righthand side there was a log cabin and then you came to the chapel and the gymnasium. As you proceeded further on down, there was an all red building on the corner which was then for junior age boys to live in and also the school. If you continued further down, you had the green building and that was for primary boys and girls. The girls on one floor and the boys on another floor. As you went on down, you came to the last building which was the main building, the administration building. In that there were junior age girls and senior girls living up on the second and third floor and the administration floor was on the first. The dining room was located on that first floor. As you went down the hall, on the right-hand side, the right half of the building there, was the dining room and the kitchen. At that time when we came, there was approximately a hundred and five children plus staff children would have made it up to maybe a hundred fifteen. All of the staff and all of the children ate in that dining room, three meals a day, all at the same time. It was very orderly. We sat at a table, there was a staff member assigned to each table, and there were children that sat assigned to the table there. As far as getting the food, to cut down on disorder, they had a waiter for each table and that waiter was the only one that could be walking around the dining room during the meal time. And that was only to go to the counter and get the food. The main dishes were served from the counter. They would bring them back and the staff member sitting at the table would serve each one of the plates individually and pass them to the children around the table. At that time each child was required to take at least a tablespoon of a serving to get used to all types of food. Many of them had never been trained that way, they just ate however they wanted to, but they learned to eat all kinds of food.

CD: You mentioned that you arrived in September of 1963. Do you remember that first night, as you were going to bed, the thoughts that were going through your head?

WV: Actually when we first arrived, we did not arrive at Eliada campus. When we first came to Asheville, we were located on Victoria Road. The present A.B. Administration building was at that time a big three or four story mansion and that housed the work for unwed mothers. We lived in a little bungalow down in back of that and on one end of that bungalow was where the unwed mothers would come after they had their child. They would come there for two days before they went back out. When we moved down here, we got to that point, we got to Victoria Road. Our furniture didn't arrive until seven days later and so we went down, there was a double bed in there and I don't know if there was an old couch or something like that. That's about all that was in the house when we came there. We sat on boxes, we got a tray from up at the main building there on the campus, we got a tray out of the kitchen, and we came down and sat on boxes there and we ate our meals there. Then eventually, we went up and ate in the dining room with the girls in there.

CD: Tell me a little about this Victoria Road residence.

WV: Well, my wife worked there full-time. When we came down, I took care of the grounds there, I took care of the old furnace there for heat for them, and I worked mainly on the campus of Eliada Home. I brought my daughter in the morning over to Eliada for kindergarten and then I would take her home at noontime and drop her off and then I would go back to Eliada and work in the afternoon again. My wife would work there

teaching the girls home economics and how to sew and how to cook and all these different things. That was at first when we came to Asheville.

CD: Approximately how long did you live at Victoria Road?

WV: We were there from September until—did we move in February?

EV: Yes, we moved in February.

WV: February of the next year we moved into a garage, well it was a cottage for carriages.

EV: It was a garage.

WV: For the Compton House. They had remodeled it into—they closed it in where it had two rooms downstairs, a kitchen and a living room. Think of this, this is a garage now. The kitchen on one side and the living room on the other and a little stairway went up to the second floor and this is not a square building, this is a rounded off peaked building so you're low up in there. Our furniture arrived and we moved it all up there. We came from New Jersey in a Cape Cod house with two bedrooms and a living room and a dining room and a kitchen and all this. We had that furniture with us. So upstairs, in the upstairs area, we had wall-to-wall furniture. Just slipped down between the beds to get into the bed. That's where we lived and we lived there, that was in February, we lived there until the following January, just after Christmas the following year. We moved down into the farmhouse, down close to the barn area, which had been remodeled and been made into a two-family house. Downstairs for one family and the upstairs for the other family. We moved into the upstairs of that farmhouse at that time.

CD: Tell me a little bit about the operations at Eliada in 1963 when you first arrived.

WV: The operations.

CD: Tell me a little bit about the dairy, about the farm.

WV: Well of course they had their dairy, which raised revenue for the home but it also was training ground for young people, for young fellows. These young people, the fellows that worked there, they would get up in the morning, three or four o'clock in the morning, go down and round up the cows, bring them in. I think there was one or two fellows that would do this. They would help the dairy men. They would round up the cows and then when they got through with that, it was probably around 6:00 that they got through milking the cows. Then they would come up, get washed, go to the dining room, have breakfast and after that, leave on their way to school. They had a full schedule in the morning that way. When they came home from school in the afternoon, they had chores again. I mentioned the dairy, those fellows had their chores until suppertime. The other children had house chores that they would do, cleaning their rooms, cleaning their buildings that they were in. They were responsible for doing this and of course before they left in the morning, they were responsible for making all their beds and having their room straightened out. Now these are children and they had to learn and sometimes it might have seemed to them difficult, hard. But they did learn practical ways of taking care of themselves that way. They would get through their chores and if they didn't—by breakfast time usually they had to do their chores, a lot of times if they didn't get finished before breakfast, they had to run back and get them done before they went to school. And of course school was right on the campus, they didn't have to go too far. The high school

children, some of them went to Asheville High School, some of them went to Hall-Fletcher, some of them went to Erwin. They caught the bus up by the director's building, the director's house up there on the corner. As far as the children, when they got home from school in the afternoon, they had chores to do and then they would have their evening meal and then after their evening meal they had study hall. They had a study hall for children to go to, it was held in the dining room in the main building and they would get helped there by the teachers of the school, would help them with their studies at night. And then it was lights out, settle down. It was usually the younger children, of course they were earlier to bed but the others I think it was something like 10:00, was the latest that some of the high schoolers could be up. Some of the others would even be 9:00 they'd they have to be getting settled in.

CD: You mentioned the dairy farm earlier. Were there other types of farm operations going on at Eliada at the time?

WV: Well of course to take care of the cattle and like that, we raised hay, we had silage, corn fields and like this, and we had some of the young people, some of the young men learned about operating tractors and equipment and doing these jobs in the field too. There was the large barn that we stored our hay in and had to be baled up, picked up, brought in, stacked in the barn.

CD: Are you referring to the dairy barn?

WV: The dairy barn, the main barn at Eliada. That's where they stored all the hay, upstairs. We also had the poultry at that time, when I first got there, they had laying chickens.

CD: Who was in charge of the chicken house?

WV: When I got there, there was supposed to be a fellow in charge of it, working with some of the young people and after I'd been there for a short time—. I first came and I was supposed to help put in purchasing of food, the inventory of food and household things like this for the cottages, for the grounds. I was there a short time and it seemed like I had some free time so I went to Mr. Cameron and asked him if there was anything else that I could help with and he said, 'Well, I was just hoping it wasn't going to be too long before you asked me that. I'd like for you go down and check on the chickens because we're not doing so well down there.' I went down and I found the water frozen up, this was February, found the water frozen up, no feed in the feeders and stuff like that, so I started taking care of the chickens and they started coming back again and that was my first beginning in poultry, at Eliada. This was something that I'd never done before and the Lord gave me the ability to work at it. After I was with that for a short time, he mentioned that previously they had raised these broilers too. Mr. Earle, from Earle-Chesterfield Mills, had donated two buildings there to be used to raise broilers in. We raised them on consignment. He put the broilers in the house, we raised them, and we sold them after nine weeks. The money was used to pay the feed and the balance was for our use. This was a nine-week program and then it got to where it was clean out the house, new sawdust. We used to go to a sawmill and shovel sawdust onto the two and a half ton truck, haul it back and then we got to where we stockpiled the sawdust because sometimes we couldn't get it. We stockpiled sawdust in one end of the barn to use in that poultry like that. We raised broilers like that and Mr. Cameron says, 'Oh, Mr. Earle has some more chickens he wants to give us.' We got these baby chicks, they were extra from

the brooders, they had them to supply their customers but we ended up with extra ones and you never knew when he was going to call up and say, “Hey, I got a bunch of chickens over here. Would you be interested in them?” And so we opened up another chicken house and raised laying chickens there.

CD: So February of 1964 is when you assumed those responsibilities? Approximately?

WV: Could have been.

CD: Did that then become your main responsibility at Eliada?

EV: He did anything they asked him to.

WV: When it comes to assigned things, yes, there were assigned things like the supplying of the food and the purchasing of the food, and picking up the food, and stocking the food, keeping the kitchen stocked at all times so that they had things to use for the menu. That and the poultry, also worked with the farm. I worked at that time with boys. Each staff member was assigned so many boys, or so many girls if it was a lady staff member. They were assigned so many to work with them on different projects, whatever had to be done. We had work programs and each staff member was assigned ones to work with them and we were responsible to train and help them learn ways of doing things, just by us showing them and working with them. Many different things that way, these are material things that I’m thinking of, but when another thing is when I came to Eliada, of course I was interested in working with young people in spiritual things. When I came to Eliada, in the small chapel that I mentioned by the gymnasium, we had a service there on Sunday morning, we had Sunday School classes that met in different areas in the

gymnasium, assigned areas there. I was Sunday School Superintendent there and then had the leadership and youth work there as well, helping to prepare young people this way too. Wednesday night we had prayer meeting, we went for prayer service in the chapel and then we divided into separate prayer groups.

CD: You mentioned that when you first arrived at Eliada, Mr. Cameron was the head of Eliada Homes. Could you tell me a little bit about Mr. Cameron, some of your memories of him?

WV: Well once again I might get very sentimental. Mr. Cameron and I were, of course, both of us knowing the Lord, interested in the things of the Lord. The scriptures tell us that Jesus is closer than a brother. I had my brothers, yes, but at Eliada Mr. Cameron was like a brother to me and I to him. There were times that, as I would go about my daily work, I would get a call from Mr. Cameron that he'd like to see me in the office. A lot of times when you're working for a Home and you get a call that the director wants to see you in the office, you can think of severe things. Mr. Cameron would call me into the office and he'd say, "Bill, have a seat," and I'd sit down. Mr. Cameron would open up his heart to me about things that were on his heart, on his mind, and he'd thank me that he had someone that he could do that with. And I just praised the Lord that he gave me the opportunity of knowing him in a real close and personal way that way. So it was—yes, we didn't agree on everything, and sometimes I was asked to do things that were hard. But I just thank him for the opportunity of serving with him there at Eliada and being one that we could be in close fellowship with, even in difficult times. I respect him a lot. Mr. Cameron had a heart for young people and when it came to training and being a director there at the Home, yes, he had to be firm as a father but it was for the young peoples'

good and we find out here in latter days as we have some of those people come back to our campus and they come back with their young people, some of them even teenagers, they say that even though it was difficult, they thank us for being firm with them and being helpful to them and that they're raising their young people in the same way even today, for that instruction that they got.

CD: There's something that's called a second generation that I'm aware of people who grew up in Eliada, and then went on and had children and those children benefitted from their parents' upbringing at Eliada and they learn the same values that their parents learned. In a way it's a generation removed but they've also been from Eliada as well. You had mentioned several years after you arrived here, around 1965 or thereabouts, you moved into the old farmhouse, which is no longer on campus. Can you describe to me physically the farmhouse, what types of rooms there were there, how big it was?

EV: Large rooms.

WV: The rooms there were each floor basically. The downstairs, they partitioned it up a little bit, cut some of the rooms and made smaller rooms out of them. It was a dormitory before we moved down there so they had divided some of the rooms to make them into smaller rooms for individuals to be in the dorm. Ours, upstairs, was mainly open, where we lived. We had four rooms upstairs and a bath. These rooms were probably ten or twelve feet—no more than that—fourteen, sixteen feet square. Four rooms. That was a living room, that was a kitchen, that was two bedrooms, is what we had upstairs. I had mentioned previously about at Clinton Baptist we purchased some tile to put in the

bathroom at Eliada, for a project there. When we moved down to the farmhouse, guess what?

END OF SIDE A.

BEGINNING OF SIDE B.

CD: We had to turn the tape over and it's September 29th and now around ten after eleven. Mr. Verigan, would you please finish telling us that humorous story about the tiles in the old farmhouse?

WV: As I was ending up on the other side of this tape, I mentioned there that previously I'd mentioned about the tiles, the project that we had at Clinton Baptist Church, Sunday School up at Clinton Baptist Church, about purchasing tiles for the bathrooms down here at Eliada. As we moved into the farmhouse, guess what we found in the bathroom? Tiles. As my wife shared just afterwards, when it came to purchasing the tiles, the plumber on the maintenance department of the Home here asked the children, "What color tile would you like to have in your bathroom?" And this one had pink and blue and green and yellow and all kinds of colors. He said, "I'll tell you what we're going to do. To satisfy all of you, you're going to have all those colors on the wall." And that's what we had. We went in there and it was a mass of different colors of tile on the wall.

CD: Let's step back a little bit and I want to ask you some more questions about, I don't know if it was referred to as Faith Cottage back then on Victoria Road, the area that you first lived in. Tell me a little bit more about the type of function that that place served, that Faith Cottage served back then in the early sixties.

WV: This is actually carried up from the original director, Dr. Lucius B. Compton. When he first started the work at Eliada, it was a work with mothers, this was the challenge that he had, to meet the needs of unwed mothers. Then as these unwed mothers gave birth, rather than to see the children go in to the world with no background or anything like that, he started the children's home. He took the children in to provide a home for them and also there were people that had passed away and the children were orphans. They had some children left on the doorstep at Dr. Compton's as well. The first work was the work with unwed mothers. When we came down to Victoria Road, where we lived at first, where my wife worked at first, when we first came down there, she worked with them teaching household duties to them. These girls would come from different states, they would come in from Tennessee or Kentucky or Georgia or wherever. The sad thing is that some of these were very young girls, ten or twelve years of age. They came to Faith Cottage there and they changed their names, they did not want anybody to know that they were there and they had that privacy. Nobody gave out their names, nobody gave out pictures, nobody said who they were or anything else. They had a shelter that they could come to. They stayed there during their pregnancy, they were checked on, they had a doctor that checked on them. They had nurses that came in and checked on them and when they would deliver the baby, they would come back and they would stay in the receiving room down in back of the main building there until they were back on their feet again and then they would go back home. That was what Faith Cottage was at first when we came down.

CD: So you arrived at Eliada in 1963, and how long were you there for?

WV: I was there until October of 1982.

CD: You must have had a variety of jobs and functions while you were there. Tell me about some of the other things you did other than working in the dairy barn, with the chickens, or the farm.

WV: I don't know. There's just so many different things that I would get into, maintenance jobs that I worked at, helping out wherever I could. When I first came, like I say, we were very short on manpower so there was a lot of jobs that had to be covered by just a small crew. One of the jobs was, we had a central heating plant at Eliada and that had to heat all of the buildings on the campus. We had a furnace that you had to tend and you had to shovel the coal in with these big scoop shovels you had to put into that thing. You had to man that during the night, during the day. We used to over to get the coal for the heat, we used to go over to, I think it was Mr. Coleman, I'm not just sure. Down at the railroad yard, we used to go down there with a two and a half ton farm truck and we would drive it underneath the coal car and we would let it fall out into the truck and we would bring it back and we would shovel it off into the coal bin at the back of Eliada. We bought through this gentleman who had the business at the railroad yard. We were able to buy the coal at a car, a regular coal car at the time, and that way it made it much less expensive to operate. There was a lot of driving and a lot of shoveling and a lot of that just for the heat plant. And when you'd go over there—sometimes you'd get coal delivered in the wintertime and you had to go over there with a bar and you had to break up the coal which it had rained on and it had frozen and you had to break it up with a bar, chunks, get it to drop out. It was work but that was where we just had to work together. There was work to be done and we got to where we depended on each other. Most of our vehicles and everything we got through army surplus. Our cars, our trucks. We had to

have some of the kids at the high school, they had to have a vehicle to get them to high school, they didn't ride a bus and they had to have a vehicle to get them there so one of the senior girls or fellows would have their license and they would drive the kids to school like that. Those cars that we got were army surplus that we got, you could get them for a hundred dollars or something like this, but they had to be used in the work at Eliada and you had to keep them for, I don't know if it was five years or something like that before you could sell them. After you used them and kept them for five years, then they would allow you to go and sell them if you wanted to. Our transportation for the Home there was army surplus. The tractors and things like this, some of those tractors when I first came were old. They had been donated by someone. We couldn't afford to buy new ones, we just had to keep that one going.

EV: He taught the kids how to drive the tractor too.

WV: That was later on, that wasn't back when I first got there. To clear the grounds and everything, why you had to teach them how to safely operate the machines like that and of course we had snow, we had sidewalks joining the buildings. I mentioned that previously about coming into the campus, telling how we came into the campus, I had been there and I guess it was in 1964, when we had a building program. The building program was to provide new cottages because safety rules and like this said that we could not have children above the first floor and here we had children in the school living in a four-story building there, living in the school building. It was their dorm but they went to school in the same building too. They'd walk out of their bedroom or whatever and they're in school. The rule said we had to do away with anything over the first floor for children like that. Then we had a building program to build three cottages. Each cottage

would be able to handle sixteen children, four rooms on each end, baths to go with them, and there were two children to each room. The houseparent apartment was in the middle and the living area and the kitchen area in the middle and a wash area, in each one of those cottages. There were three cottages, we built a new school building and dining room at that time in that building program. I think it was three hundred sixty some thousand dollars, is what the building program was at that time. We're talking about 1964, that's a lot of money. Our roads, since we were going to build cottages, our entrance road coming off of Eliada Road, had to be done away with. We had to move the little log cabin that I mentioned previously, moved it over on to the bend of the road below the campground there, on a flat area there. They brought in movers and they moved that log cabin before they did away with the road, because that was the easiest way to get out. They moved that building. Then they had the dedication there, of those buildings, and they had to open up the road that went in back again, back of the gymnasium and school.

CD: So the road initially went right through what is currently where the cottages are.

WV: Right. The entrance road came right off of that road, right down, right straight all the way to the main building. That was just a big wide dirt road.

EV: And that was woods, all down there, this was all woods.

WV: This was farm land here. We got in the building program and we got that and they built an entrance road, had to cut down through the woods to join on to Leicester Highway. That was our new entrance road. We ended up they built that road and then they were going to pave it and they started paving it and as they got up to the main

building—they had from the highway to the main building in the project and the man said, “I’m here with the equipment. I know you don’t have any more money,” because this is all we had paid for, from the main building down to Leicester Highway. “I know you don’t have any more money. I got my equipment here and everything, if you want me to go ahead, I’ll pave the rest of it.” So they had a word of prayer and the Lord said, “Build it.” So they put the pavement on in, up through the front of the main building, the all-red building, the green building, they put all that pavement on in there to join it. That’s the way things worked. When they came to doing something, we just sought the Lord and his lead. As far as the building program, it was three hundred and sixty thousand dollars I think and it was something between four hundred and twenty and four hundred and thirty thousand dollars came in on that building program there. And that established three cottages up there, the school which is now been used for other things because they don’t have a school right now. They made that improvement. Then, I can’t remember what the year was now, but a few years later the Lion’s Club here, 31A I believe it was, they decided on a project. We still needed to move some children and we’d only had those three cottages and that didn’t satisfy, we still needed to move some children. I guess that was out of the green building they had to move the children, yes, out of the green building. They still had some on the second floor and they had the boys on the first floor. They still had to get that and the Lion’s Club decided that they wanted to build a cottage of their own on the campus there. So they took over the project and built it. A lot of the Lion’s men, they came in and they did the work on that building. It was their building, their project and they did the work on that building, the plumbing work, the brick work, and everything else in that cottage. It stands there today, Lion’s

Cottage. Each one of the cottages—the first three cottages and the school and like that, were dedicated and they had a dedication service and Mr. Bell, Billy Graham's father-in-law, L. Nelson Bell, came out and had the dedication service there for us when we dedicated those buildings, those cottages.

CD: To your knowledge, had Mr. Billy Graham ever been out to Eliada?

WV: I don't know. I can't say.

EV: They had a chair in one of the cottages that belonged to him.

WV: I can't say for sure, I don't recall, while I was there, whether he did or not.

CD: I understand that you did a little soccer coaching in your time.

WV: Like you mentioned before, there's so many different things that I just did. I just enjoyed doing it and a lot of times I don't reflect on it because these are things that I did, not for honor or like that, but just things that I did because it was something to do and I enjoyed working with kids and so, yes, I worked with soccer because I loved soccer. I was a soccer player before I came here, when they first started soccer back in probably forty-four, 1944 or something like that is when they first brought soccer into this country. I got interested in it like that so when I came here, of course Mr. Cameron was athletic too, he had coached basketball teams before he came here. He'd been over at Ben Lipman School over there and coached over there and so we just worked together on this and basketball. We mentioned before that our young people went to school here at Eliada, that we had kindergarten through the eighth grade school here at Eliada. For the ninth grade out, they went out to the public schools. We wanted to try to get it where they

didn't have to go out to high school at all. First we started a ninth grade and this is probably in the late seventies I guess, we started a ninth grade here as well. We got a lot of flak from the school systems and like that and it put a lot of pressure on our kids so we felt we would just go ahead and let them go to high school. When they went out to high school, especially being interested for the boys in sports, they went out and they couldn't get on to any of the teams because most of the teams were—they'd been going to school all the time and they were sort of cliques, you know. Our kids, coming from a children's home, they couldn't make it. Another thing is they couldn't be out at all times of the day and night. We were on schedule and they had to live in a schedule. They couldn't be different places according to what the school event might call for, that they had to be over there for a practice that would interfere with their supper schedule and it would interfere with the routine on the campus, so we just couldn't have that. Rather than deprive them of athletics, we started the athletic program here at Eliada to give them contacts and to give them an opportunity. Generally our sports started at fourth grade. We played fourth grade up through high school. I can remember taking kids even to Charlotte and down to Greenville to play other Christian schools. On the bus, take them down there to play athletics over there. We got a lot of good healthy sports.

CD: Where was the soccer field?

WV: The soccer field was where the present athletic field is at Eliada. Before I got there they had graded that area, had a big old bulldozer that they got from surplus too. You can see where it goes now, they cut that down and leveled it off, pushed that dirt down to where they're building now. That was a hill there, but that was before I got there. Like I said, they cut it down and they did some work with the bulldozer and it was just a big old

army surplus bulldozer that they had and the assistant director, Mr. Lee Griffith, he learned to operate it. I don't know whether he'd had any previous experience or not, but he got on it and he started pushing pedals and levers and things like this and he got to where he could use it. He graded the road, he graded some of the road up the mountain with that thing.

CD: Let's talk a little bit about the mountain. What was Slippy Mountain like when you first arrived?

WV: Well, it had a good name. When it was wet, it was slippy. It was just a dirt road, not just dirt but clay too. They had used this bulldozer and they had cut a pathway up onto the top of the mountain up there so that they could get up there. On the top of the mountain there was a reservoir that they had. At the time when I came, they were on city water. During the daytime, we would pull water off the city water and we would pump it up the mountain to the reservoir. The reason why we did that, is that when they first took and they were on the city water, you had the water coming in there from the city but then in the afternoon when people went home, along the line when people would turn on their water, that cut down the flow up top and didn't have any water to flush the toilets or cook or anything like that, so that's the reason why they had a reservoir up there and they would pump water up there, they had a pump that pumped water up there all day from the city line on the campus there but at night time, they would turn off the inflow and they'd open this up and you'd get the gravity feed to get it. I can remember at camp meeting time, we would sometimes have a hundred, a hundred fifty guests. When I came down, I mentioned that I came down on one of my trips, when we came down it was a camp meeting time and the children—I can remember we were in the main building, but the

children would give up their bed and let the guests sleep in their bed while they were there during camp meeting. They'd rather sleep on the floor. During camp meetings there, I mentioned before the water, you can imagine everybody trying to shave and shower and stuff like this. There were times when you'd start shaving and there was no water. Take a shower and there's no water. It just ends up no water. There's too many demanding now, on our own campus even though it's coming off a gravity feed, there's too many. The pipe that they had was enough to come down for the campus, but when you add all this extra strain on to it, it wasn't enough to supply everything, that's after we put on some of the new construction, we still tapped into the city, but we still didn't have that much water flow pumping in there from the city to supply the cottages and we had to still depend on this gravity feed at night to use the city and also use the gravity feed to try to give us water.

CD: Other than the reservoir at the top of the mountain, was the mountain used for anything, when you first arrived here?

WV: Basically no. We used it for picnics sometimes, we'd go up on top of the mountain, we'd take a trailer in back of the tractor and we'd pull all the pots and pans and everything up there on the trailer and we'd have a picnic up on the top of the mountain there, there's a flat area up there and we'd have picnics up there with the kids. It's a beautiful area up there, you can see out—

EV: I always said I wanted a home up there, on the mountain, on the rock that overlooks the whole place down there.

WV: In these latter years, we had a couple of Easter services, sunrise services up there on top of the mountain. It wasn't used for much and I guess it was in the late seventies, they came and cut some of the timber off the mountain and sold that too and that gave a little bit of revenue coming in that way.

CD: During the years that you were there, was that the only time they actually came in and cut the timber?

WV: As far as I can remember that was the only time.

CD: Which part of the mountain did they cut, do you recall?

WV: Of course some of the mountain was clear. There's some of the mountain up there that's just open areas up there. I guess it would be the east side and maybe the north side is where they cut some of the timber off.

CD: You had mentioned that toward the end of your tenure at Eliada you had gotten involved to a certain degree with the maintenance in the reforestation of the mountain. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

WV: This was toward the end of the time that I was there. The previous farm manager had left and so the duties of the hay fields and replanting—we replanted a lot of those in alfalfa. We were trying to raise good crops that would be sellable at that time for hay so we could get some money. As I got into it, they auctioned off all of the cattle, the dairy herds. We went out of the dairy business and they auctioned all that off. We had the fields there and they lay dormant for several years. Talking to Mr. Cameron, we thought that we could raise hay enough to try to make it a profitable thing to sell hay. That was

when I took and re-plowed, re-did fields over again and planted alfalfa in there. That went on up until I left there. And they even sold off—we were going to raise beef cows, they got rid of the beef cows that we were raising. This is just toward the end after Mr. Cameron left too. The fields were turned over to somebody else, we stopped—.

CD: Did any of this occur while Mr. Cameron was the director?

WV: He was still here when the dairy was sold off. Trying to recall. The whole thing—we had board members that were in charge of Biltmore Dairy. And when it came to us over here at Eliada, they wanted Eliada to look like Biltmore. And they were real particular and we had to try to shape up everything according to what they would—-. They had money over there at Biltmore, we didn't have that much money but they still wanted us to—. A board member from over there wanted us to look like Biltmore so some of the things that we did to try to improve the looks of the campus and everything like this. We had a lot of board members that were in influential businesses and we appreciated that, we appreciate what they were able to do and their influence to help out financially the work here at Eliada.

CD: What do you think about the whole movement right now to try to put the tabernacle back into use again?

WV: Well that I only just recently heard about. I was not aware that this was taking place. I think in the last pre-interview I had with you, you had mentioned something about that. I didn't even know this was in effect. We had to destroy the old tabernacle because it got to where it wouldn't pass the laws here in Asheville as far as safety. So we had to dump it in, burn it up, and that was when they decided we need to build another

tabernacle so that's when they put up the metal building which was the tabernacle when I left there.

CD: Do you recall what year they burned the old tabernacle down?

WV: Offhand I don't. That must have been in the late sixties?

EV: It was before we came.

WV: No, the old tabernacle.

EV: Yes, the old tabernacle.

WV: It wasn't burned before we came. It was still here when we first came.

EV: That had built it again.

WV: The old tabernacle.

EV: Yes, the one over there on the corner.

WV: They didn't build a new one until after all the building program was over and all that kind of stuff.

EV: You mean the new tabernacle?

WV: He wants to know when was the old one destroyed.

CD: As I recall the fire department came out and they did it.

WV: As far as I know, it was the easiest way to get rid of all the timbers and like that, was just to burn it.

CD: What happened to all the seating in the middle? They had long rows of—.

WV: They were concrete. The whole base on the thing was concrete, like an amphitheater.

CD: There were wooden benches that people would sit on in the middle, weren't there?

WV: I can't remember that. They might have had wooden boards on the concrete, on the steps that went up, as they headed up. They might have had wooden boards to sit on instead of sitting on the concrete.

EV: We had chairs, when we were there.

CD: Was the old tabernacle used for anything other than the camp meetings?

WV: Mainly it wasn't.

CD: So it just sat there dormant.

WV: All except for camp meeting time. That was built by people that wanted to have a place—. They came here in horse and buggies and stuff like this, and I don't know where they met but they met here for services and they wanted to build a place to meet in and that's when they got together and decided to build a tabernacle.

CD: What was your last year at Eliada?

WV: 1982.

CD: Tell me about the circumstances surrounding your departure.

WV: I had been told that they didn't have anything for me to do anymore at Eliada. They sold the beef stock and everything like this. They had an auction, they sold all of the farm equipment, tractors, everything. So we didn't have that to go on, and I was told that I could go and find something else, someplace else to work. That's about it.

CD: And where did you go from there?

WV: From there, I didn't have a job. I lived on the campus there at Eliada so I didn't have a house. So I just looked up employment offices and I went into security at Anderson, driving school. Security with Anderson and also driving school. I worked part-time, it was actually full-time on security and part-time on driving school at that time. I started right at the end of '82.

EV: Seems funny, we came there in September and we left there in September nineteen years later.

CD: Do you have any last thoughts that you'd like to share about Eliada or your experiences there or what you learned?

WV: The main thing that I have continued to learn throughout my life, that the Lord is faithful. Wherever you are, if you are committed to him, he had promised to supply your needs. And I just have that faith in him. He supplied it all my life. I've had no time that I haven't really felt confident that he would meet our needs. In the economy that we live in nowadays, there's so much trust in material things, material gains, things like that. As I look back over my life, every job that I ever had, except for experience in working with people, sharing with people, I didn't materially gain anything but the Lord still supplied

my needs. My daughter is working at Eliada Home now. When we first came down she was five years of age and she's been on the staff there now for nineteen going on twenty years. She continues to be a testimony to God's grace there as well, which I praise the Lord for.

CD: Mr. Verigan, I want to thank you for taking the time to sit down with me and talk about your experiences and Mrs. Verigan as well for sharing your thoughts as well. It was a pleasure meeting both of you.

END OF INTERVIEW.